1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

693
273
352
516

PLATE VIII. The clerk of a Native Court, with one of the court assessors, sits in the chief's village issuing a permit for selling beer to a man who has come on behalf of his sister.

[222]

PLATE IX. A Native Authority councillor, sitting on the verandah of the Native Court in his county, issues passes to men wishing to collect caterpillars. There are no edible caterpillars in Ngoniland, and Ngoni who wish to collect them provide themselves with passes to show to the Cewa chiefs in whose counties caterpillars are found.

[Facing p. 153]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

woman had her home. The other was the 'gate'[1] of the kraal at the opposite end of the enclosure to the 'big house'. The name by which this 'gate' was known applied also to the space on each side of the gap in the kraal fence through which the cattle went out and came in—a gap which was closed at night with heavy poles. Here at the gate the men of the village sat by day, ate their meals brought to them by children from their wives' huts, talked, received strangers, pursued their crafts, and supervised the return of the cattle in the evenings.

In and around the main huts within the tall reed fences, the life of a Ngoni household went on. Some of the huts were rectangular, others round. All had a veranda built up above the ground-level and shaded by the house roof. The back parts of the veranda were often enclosed with mats to make additional storage space. In old Ngoni households the open space around the hut was kept swept and mudded and polished like a floor, so that people could sit there in comfort and cleanliness as well as on the veranda. Near the house was one or more little reed platforms about five feet above the ground, where kitchen utensils, gourds and vegetables were laid to dry, and which were used to sit under as shelter from the sun in the hot months. Large and small wooden pounding mortars and poles, clay pots of every size and shape, mats for sleeping and for drying grain, baskets for many purposes, wooden food trays and spoons, gourds of several shapes, formed the traditional household equipment always to be seen outside and around the hut, as well as inside.

In each household, within the main hut, there were two places of particular significance. One was by the two main door-posts at the entrance. These posts with the hollow for the fireplace in the centre of the floor divided the hut into a right-hand and left-hand side—the men's side and the

[1] and [2] A short list of the vernacular terms for some these common Ngoni place-names is given at end of the book.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

primarily within his mother's household, but also, and especially immediately after weaning, in his grandmother's household. His needs for food and warmth could in fact be met in any of the households which formed part of his father's house and family group. There was no greater contrast for the small boy about the age of seven between this kind of life in the women's compound and his plunge into the life of the boys' dormitory.

The father's role with young children

During day-time in Ngoni villages Ngoni men and women lived almost in two separate worlds, the women in their compounds, the men by the kraal gate or about the village. When important visitors arrived the veranda of the 'big house' became a general meeting-place. Chiefs and leading men who had acquired chairs, among other modern household furniture, preferred to entertain their guests on their own veranda where they had some degree of privacy, and to offer them chairs to sit on instead of the kraal fence to lean against. This use of chairs which they found more comfortable to sit on brought many of the fathers of families back to their own verandas now and then during the day, though they continued to eat their meals with the other men at the kraal gate, and to go there to discuss village affairs and watch over the coming and going of the cattle.

This change of habit brought the fathers of families into closer touch with their young children, and it was accelerated by the growing Christian tradition in which fathers were more closely associated with certain aspects of their children's upbringing. It was the father who arranged for the baptism of the children which took place in the local church and was a ceremony attended by most of the village, whether Christians or not. When an evangelist or a school-teacher conducted evening prayers, as they often did near the kraal where anyone could come after the evening meal, Christian fathers sometimes carried a child in their arms to the prayers.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

sieves for straining beer or water poured through ashes to make salt. These lay around all day if they were being used, and were periodically scrubbed and put on the rack to dry, and at night stacked tidily in the veranda. In the day-time sleeping-mats of finely woven fibre were brought out into the sun, and so were skins and cloths used as coverings at night. Some of the Ngoni used curved wooden headrests as pillows often carved at the ends with animals' heads to fascinate a small child.

On the polished space in front of the hut were laid from time to time mats on which sprouting millet for making beer was dried, or partly pounded damp maize. A young child was sometimes told to keep the fowls and dogs off these mats. These animals and often small kids, wandered and pecked and scratched and quarrelled inside the fence all day, and young children chased them.

Beyond the fence lay other fenced compounds grouped round the cattle kraal, and beyond the village buildings lay patches of woodland, grass pastures, cultivated 'gardens', and water-holes and streams. Going with the mother or grandmother or a nurse girl or helper to fetch water, or work in the gardens was an expedition for young children which they delighted in.

In these village surroundings there were some places forbidden to young children, who were corrected by everyone with smacks and stern reproofs until they learned to keep away. One such forbidden place was the kraal gateway where the men sat and talked and ate. No woman until she had passed the menopause was allowed to cross over in front of the gateway lest she injure the cattle. If therefore children strayed down there, younger women did not like to go and fetch them back, as the men always grumbled if women went there lest they should harm the cattle. It was nevertheless a place that had a great attraction for boys of five to seven years old, because they found their fathers there and the herd boys. The boys in this age-group of five to seven showed

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285 the porridge inside warm. For straining beer, a special wide mesh basket is used, either conical or hemispherical in shape. Round and rectangular baskets of various sizes, with flat lids, are also found [482] and are used for carrying small quantities of food on a journey.

In former times, wooden plates were used, but these are now 415 very rare. Wooden spoons are still made and used, and large flat 412 porridge stirrers, with geometrical ornamentation, are common. [531] Wooden hemispherical pats, with a handle, are used for smoothing cooked porridge.

412 At the back of the hut, or on the verandah outside, are the pestle and mortar used for reducing maize and other cereals to flour. Mortars range in height from one to four feet, the smaller mortars being used by children or for crushing ground-nuts. They are usually of about one foot in diameter, and are made from single blocks of wood, usually from Afzilia quanzensis or Monotes trees. The inside of the block is hollowed out to leave a receptacle for the maize that is nearly as deep as the mortar is high. The only decoration is [531] a ridge of wood about an inch wide left encircling the base three or four inches from the ground. Pestles are undecorated cylinders of wood, made from Terminalia sericea or Kigelia pinnata trees. They may be as much as six feet long, and range in thickness from four [504] inches down to the half-inch pestles used by young children playing at pounding.

The hard residue of maize that cannot be reduced to flour by pounding is ground between two stones, and these grinding stones are also kept in the hut. Not every woman has her own grindstones [421] or her own pestle and mortar, and these objects are loaned and borrowed within the village.

Most huts contain some form of chair or stool, but these are • 352 sometimes very small indeed, standing only two inches off the ground. Petrol boxes are used to sit on, and deck chairs, known in the vernacular as "sleeping chairs," are common. Carpenters make [463] a small folding chair that is fairly common. European upright chairs, basket chairs and Morris chairs are sometimes seen, but these are not made locally.

/8 cont'd/

352 Beds are owned in general by the younger generation only, and then at the rate of one per household. Otherwise, everyone sleeps on the floor on a reed mat. During the day, the mat is rolled 285 up except when needed for drying flour in the sun. These mats are made from reeds that grow near streams. The reeds are split in four, and are threaded with a thin rope made from the inner bark of the nzizi tree. Wooden headrests are now a rarity, and if any 513 [77] headrests at all is used, it is a European pillow. Blankets, quilts and, less frequently, sheets, are bought from stores.

/9/ V

412 The chief tool for use in the garden is the hoe. Ruins of furnaces for smelting iron ore are still to be seen, but are not now used, [325] and are said to have been worked in the old days only by Chewa [567] slaves. Hoe blades are bought in the stores, and hafted with a handle made in the village. Handle making is a man's job, but one that every man knows how to do. Axes are made from blades bought in the store, or else from a worn down hoe blade, with a home-made handle. Adzes are used for mortar making, and young boys make miniature adzes as toys. A pointed blade hafted on to the end of a straight handle is used for making holes in the ground when building.

493 Sledges and, less commonly, unarticulated carts with solid [241] wheels are made for transporting the harvest from the fields to the village, and for collecting firewood. These are pulled by cattle, [493] not always oxen, using simple yokes made of wood and sinew, with a wooden drawbar.

224 Hunting is carried on in the dry season, particularly towards the end, when the grass burns easily. Guns of varying degrees of 411 antiquity are used, but none of these are made by Ngoni, although the Chewa still make guns. On a hunt, the rank and file are armed with throwing spears and knobkerries. The gun carriers walk about 224 two hundred yards in front of the main body, who are spread on a single line at right angles to the line of advance. The leader of

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909) 1910 FT7 Yao FT7
Maravi FR4
Ngoni FR5

whole frame-work is secured by bark lashings, the walls, inside and out, and the floor are plastered with mud from an ant-hill, mixed with a little cow dung, if possible. In some houses the walls do not reach up to the roof, leaving a space through which smoke may escape and air enter.

At Chipoli and at Mangoche houses were built on piles and in trees respectively to avoid lions. A house is occupied by a man and his wife and any young children; no elder relations are allowed to sleep there. The children, when aged about five years, go to live with the maternal grandmother till their first *isyago*; there may be thus a dozen or more children living with the grandmother, who feeds them and sometimes also provides clothing. Such children are said not to have coitus with each other as they are relations. After *isyago*, if not married, the girls go to live again at their grandmother's house, the boys to the *nyumba ya bwalo*, four to ten or more using such a house as a dormitory. They get their food from the grandmother, visit her and may use her utensils, sit on her bed, but never so with their mother.

In houses where there are partitions or verandah rooms these smaller rooms are often used as bed chambers, and always as store rooms for baskets, pots, hoes, etc. The native usually sleeps on a mat laid on the ground; in some cases the ground is raised into a kind of dais (Angoni and at Mangoche). Among Yao and many Mañanja, wooden beds are now used, introduced from the coast. The Angoni make wooden stools from conveniently shaped branches (Fig. 10). The native has so few belongings that he makes nothing in the way of shelves, nor hooks for hangings. Clothes are stored in baskets. The hut is kept swept and all refuse deposited on a dust heap near the hut.

FIG. 10.

The doorway is closed by a door made of reeds and grass bound together. This is placed against the inside of the doorway, and a pole dropped in between two sets of supports. In the day time the door often rests against a fifth support. There are no windows and the smoke finds its way out through the roof thatch. A guest house (*kuka*) with fence (*chimbunde*) round it used to be found in villages, but does not exist any longer.

There are no ceremonies connected with the building of a house or the preparation of the materials for its construction. There are no household gods. The fire must be in the middle of the hut, and on one side is the bed. Any people visiting the hut must remain on the opposite side of the fire, except "friends," and on no account must children go round to the other side, because under the bed the woman's diapers are laid to dry. The fire must not be touched by the male children, but is tended by the girls. The fire is generally kept burning continuously, but it is of no consequence if it goes out—a burning branch is brought from a neighbouring hut. At the death of a headman or other person in the village all fires are extinguished, fresh fire is then made in the dead man's house and from this passed from hut to hut. There is only one method of making fire, that is, the fire stick.